

IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

AGRICULTURE, IRRIGATION, AND MARSHLANDS

Working in conjunction with host ministries and higher education institutions, USAID promotes agricultural production and economic opportunity in rural areas through agricultural, irrigation, and marshlands initiatives. The initiatives will expand private sector support services and renovate physical facilities, with a special emphasis on southern Iraq's marshlands.

Accomplishments

- *Agriculture:* USAID announced on October 17 the award of the Agriculture Reconstruction and Development Program for Iraq (ARDI) to Maryland-based contractor Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).
- *Marshlands:* A four-person technical team traveled to the southern marshes in June to assess social and economic conditions, to collect soil and water samples in three marshes in existing and re-flooded sites to determine the feasibility of irrigating and restoring the marshes.
- The team established working relationships with Ministry of Irrigation officers and involved scientists from the Marine Science Center, University of Basrah.

Next Steps

- *Agriculture:* Commence the first phase of the project which will run three months and focus on quick-impact activities to stimulate agricultural production: seed, fertilizer and irrigation equipment assistance and distribution.
- *Irrigation:* Verify irrigation water governance system.
- *Marshlands:* A team is currently in the southern marshes collecting more data and prepare an action plan. The \$4-million Marshlands Initiative will include a river basin and hydraulic model of the marshes, plus humanitarian infrastructure and basic initial surveys.

Issues

- *Agriculture:* Coordinate with the Ministries of Agriculture and Trade to balance grain imports with expanding national production.
- *Marshland:* Develop dual basin water-use master plan to coordination of urban, industrial, environmental, and agricultural water users.
- *Irrigation:* Careful economic and engineering evaluation to determine the potential for collecting irrigation use fees. For example, the renovation of irrigation facilities (pumps, drains, gates) to compensate for years of deferred maintenance and lack of spare parts.
- Ultimate success depends on both Iraqi and international participation and consensus.